1: McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

the most *human* of all substances, and, therefore, a potent protection against supernatural beings. It is valuable as a defence against evil monsters, but it is equally deadly to shamans and other human beings with supernatural powers. In the distant past, Raven taught mankind that to sleep with a menstruating woman would so blind a man that he would be unsuccessful in hunting. The belief is that animals, knowing everything that takes place, avoid one who is so unclean. One old man mentioned that he had failed to obey this injunction and considered his loss of virility as a punishment, overlooking the fact that he was over seventy years of age.

The coming of adolescence in a boy is recognized by change in voice and the other usual indications. He is neither taboo nor unclean, and consequently does not have to undergo any restrictions on his actions. There is no ceremony to mark the entry of a youth into adult membership of the tribe; instead, this comes gradually and puberty is no more than an indication of increasing age and strength.

Marriage

Like most so-called "primitive" peoples, the Bella Coola regard the married state as the normal condition of man. Anyone unwilling to wed is considered unnatural. Since the number of the sexes is approximately equal, the only persons forced to live alone are elderly widows and widowers, and those crippled, either mentally or physically. Such individuals are looked upon as unfortunate; in fact, they have failed in one of the most fundamental of life's struggles. Man provides fish and game, builds houses and canoes, while woman collects berries, makes baskets, cooks, and performs the multitudinous small household tasks.

"Is it not to the benefit of each to marry?" say the Bella Coola.

Marriage is not a mere economic arrangement, nor is its sole function to regulate relations between the sexes. Its most important feature is that it governs the status of the child.

1: McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

to force his attentions on a slave woman if she objected, although her refusal would be most unusual on account of his prestige. There were no professional prostitutes; a man usually gave a small present to a girl from whom he had received favours, and she was expected to give him a little, dainty basket filled with undyed cedar-bark to use as a sponge. Such relations appear always to have been of common occurrence. Today, as formerly, a man's morality is considered to be his own affair; laxity may lower his prestige, but no law is broken, and his neighbours laugh and chaff him about it. In fact, sexual matters are discussed with the greatest freedom, and a person who has been caught is mocked mercilessly. When visiting a foreign tribe, a man sometimes lives with a woman and, on parting, composes and sings a song describing her charms. One man did this after living with a Kitlobe woman, and on his return to Bella Coola found that some of his fellows had learnt it in some unexplained manner; they used to sing it to him, much to their amusement, in part to his own, and somewhat to the annoyance of his wife. This perhaps illustrates rather clearly the attitude of the Bella Coola to an infraction of morality—where no marriage rite has been broken; it is amusing rather than disgusting. There are no times when the moral code ceases to function. At potlatches, and also at *kusiut* dances, there appears always to have been a certain amount of laxity, although this was strictly prohibited within the house where the ceremony was taking place. Such behaviour is due to the excitement and stimulus of a large gathering, not to anything connected with the rites themselves.

Perverted sexual desires, like other matters connected with the relations of the sexes, are regarded as concerning the individual alone. Sodomy appears to be unknown. Intercourse by pre-adolescents is held to be disgusting, but carries with it no social ostracism. Incestuous union, however, is mildly anti-social; it exposes the offender to secret contempt, but does not interfere with his attainment of whatever position his wealth

1: McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

place in the manner already described. After passing through the fourth hole, or for the fourth time through the single opening, the two go to some lonely pool in the forest where the mourner washes. They light a fire and deposit on it some of his clothing, placing the rest in a stump or hollow tree. The friend always takes with him a supply of new clothing which the person being purified puts on and returns home, cleansed from the immediate taint of death.

The above rite protects widower or widow, but does not alter the fact that for one year they are ceremonially "unclean" and must obey sundry taboos. They must not go to the bank of the river, or even appear at the front door of a house facing it. To do so is displeasing to the salmon; for the same reason they cannot eat this fish unless it has been smoked. If they wish to travel on the ocean, they cannot embark at the village but must go through the woods to a point on the shore and there be picked up by the canoe. There is a regular "Widows and Widowers Rock" about a mile on either side of every village on the ocean. The one near Kimsquit is called *Sqlan'li*, and there is thought to be blood on it. A person mourning a consort must wear a hat decorated with miniature coppers of which the bottoms are bent upwards; should this be omitted, when the offender remarries, the new husband or wife will soon die.

In addition to these taboos, there are customary laws of behaviour, an infraction of which renders the offender liable to social disapproval. Widows and widowers should cut their hair short, and the former should rub ashes on the face. Sexual intercourse is prohibited to both sexes; if this rule is broken, the relatives of the deceased are insulted. Remarriage should not take place for at least a year, although among poor people it sometimes occurs after only six months, in which case all taboos and restrictions automatically cease. There is no law on this point, but it is considered fitting to allow this period to elapse. These requirements clearly indicate that bereavement is not merely an individual affair, but entails social and

1:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924)1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

These become lilies (of the species known as *lälkänelp* or *walilikwätsälätsälats*, "The most potent of the pond") from the roots of which a tonic can be brewed. They can be collected by anyone, and the places where they grow are well known, but certain rules must be followed. Before reaching the pond the gatherer must find four spruce saplings, cut from each a bough projecting eastward, and lay these two by two, beside the water, with a space between. After plucking the lily roots he must place them on the ground between the spruce branches and tie the whole into a bundle with strips of dyed and undyed cedar-bark. He must be careful to wind these wrappings clockwise. On arriving at the house where the tonic is to be prepared, the bundle must be thrown in through the smoke-vent, never carried through the door. After these precautions the medicine can be prepared with safety. The roots are cut into thin slices and boiled for four days; a sick person then drinks several cupsful of the brew, which is particularly good for the blood. This remedy is especially effective if the patient is observing ceremonial chastity. The person administering the potion sees to it that the one being treated conforms to certain regulations for forty days. He must not eat fresh meat, fresh salmon, or any food prepared by a widow or a catamenial woman; he must not approach too closely a girl who is secluded following puberty, and he must observe absolute continence, not even sleeping with his wife. Death follows the breaking of any of these taboos.

Although supernatural good fortune is most frequently obtained from either a *mätsqus* or a *sisiutl*, it can be derived from other supernatural beings. In such cases the acquisition is seldom dangerous. The following tale describes the *qokän·i*.

Long before the coming of the white man, but very long after the first people came to this earth, a certain Kimsquit man, *Wikwanutl*, who was also called *O'miätl*, was snaring mountain goats on Mount *Tcopinäil* when he heard on the upper slopes a peculiar cry which he recognized, from descriptions given him by the old people, as the note of a *qokän·i*.

2:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

attend every *kusiut* dance. Usually all *kukusiut* do so in any case, but the attendance of all novices and those who have had calls is obligatory. If the dancer's face has been blackened, it must be kept so during this period. At every *qothm* he dances to his eight songs, and throughout the ceremonial season has the power of attracting to himself the spirit of an uninitiated person. He sleeps in whatever house a dance is taking place, but is forbidden to hold sexual intercourse except in his own, which, of course, is possible only when a call comes to another housemate. Failure to obey this injunction was formerly punished by the marshals with death. These rules apply to every dancer.

Alquntäm enters *Nusqulxwaista* at the winter solstice, and at that time calls come to those *kukusiut* of whom he is patron. It is uncertain whether or not this entails the regular ceremony of four nights' duration. On the entry of the supreme being, *Noäkxnum* seizes his paddle (or pole?), returns to *Smaien·a*, and then descends the Bella Coola River. It is believed by the uninitiated that X can see him as he passes, and the singers compose a ninth song for him. The words describe how the departing *Noäkxnum* empties a large number of olachen into the river.[11] X dances to it, but no call comes to him. This final episode of the complicated ritual occurs, of course, after calls have come to other *kukusiut*.

It sometimes happens that no *kusiut* of whom *Noäkxnum* is patron has enough food to give the lengthy dance just described, but some type of ritual is necessary to inaugurate the ceremonial season. Accordingly, someone with the proper prerogative is asked by the marshals to see *Noäkxnum* when at the mouth of the river; then, when he passes upstream four days later, a call can come to any *kusiut*. This abbreviated ceremony, termed *Imältsnidjutqwlsan*, is carried out in the manner described above, except that it is completed in four days with only two songs.

[11] *Noäkxnum* is accordingly often called *Nutlulxnum*.

2: McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

[The Scratch Dance]

*575 *796 On the following evening, *nebusam*, when the uninitiated have been called in, they see *Älquntäm* standing in the centre of the space behind the fire, wearing a large mask and a blanket decorated with tufts of dyed cedar-bark. *Äno°likwolsaix* moves to and fro as she gives her customary explanations, which are echoed by the heralds. The masked representation of *Sno'olxults Älquntäm* rushes back and forth behind the fire, waving his arms to and fro as if he had an uncontrollable impulse to scratch someone. The four masked Holders move with him, as if to restrain him from dashing among the uninitiated.

"See!" says *Äno°likwolsaix*. "That is what they do in the land above."

After gazing upon these wonders for some time, the uninitiated are expelled and the *kukusiut* perform a dramatic act. As many as possible crowd around *Sno'olxults Älquntäm*, pressing with their hands against the back of his neck, the seat of [826] the spirit, calling *hoip*, in an effort to soothe him. This is done four times, without avail; he remains as wild as ever. Then one of the marshals removes the mask, and the same methods are used to try to soothe the wearer. But still they are of no avail. The mask is replaced, and *Sno'olxults Älquntäm* rushes forth, with the four Holders in close attendance, and followed by a large number of *kukusiut*. Starting at the lowest house, he enters each in turn, dashing around the fire and startling the uninitiated in the same manner that X had done, but not actually scratching anyone. Non-members cower in terror at this invasion of their houses by a supernatural being. On the return to X's home, *Sno'olxults Älquntäm* is pacified by the frenzied beating of sticks. The masks [532] are burnt in due course, after which the *kukusiut* assemble on the sidewalk outside X's house to sing one of his songs and thus further the return of his call to the land above. Sometimes X himself wears the mask of *Sno'olxults Älquntäm*, more [834] often it is entrusted to another *kusiut*, but the wearer must

2:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

[The Scratch Dance]

obey one prohibition; he must not sleep with his wife for four days.

Like a Cannibal, X is liable to frenzy for the rest of the ceremonial season. During this period he remains secluded within his house, and the uninitiated willingly avoid him believing him to be mentally deranged. He attends every *kusiut* dance, where his latent madness helps to frighten the uninitiated. If strangers from Kimsquit or *Täl·io* visit Bella Coola, he at once becomes frenzied, rushes to the beach and scratches them, precisely as a Cannibal would do; in this case he must be pacified in the same manner. A Scratcher always saves goods to recompense scratched foreigners. If it is the first time that X has danced, he must remain secluded for the following summer, and give his ceremony the next winter. During the warm months he remains within the back-room of his house, and though some of the uninitiated know of his presence, still believing him mad they do not intrude upon his privacy. The coming of foreigners during this period excites him to frenzy and he scratches them, irrespective of the time of year.

It might be mentioned that some Scratcher names are indicative of the dancer's function, and others, such as "The Cause of Fear," have reference to his prowess.

THE BREAKER DANCE

When a Bella Coola speaks of the fear which *kusiut* dances cause the uninitiated, he almost invariably cites in order the Cannibal, Scratch, and Breaker dances. *Kukusiut* with these three prerogatives have no more privileges than other members of the society, nor are they considered superior in rank, but similarity in their functions leads to an almost automatic association. If questioned further, a Bella Coola will usually say that he regards the Cannibal dance to be first, with the Scratch and Breaker equal, but less important. Breakers share with Cannibals and Scratchers the prerogatives of not blackening their faces; of having as theme for their songs the land

2: McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

[The Stomach-cutting Dance]

* 575 * 796 533 The singers have also composed a song for each of the *ănuyex* and these too must be practised, while the men dance or remain still as they think fit. Since no uninitiated are present the affair is purely a rehearsal. The words of each of these songs is of the manner in which the patron helped X to survive his ordeal. By this time it is late and the *kukusiut* disperse after the usual meal and admonitions of the marshals.

* 575 * 796 532 The next day, *qotlim*, the carpenters assemble early in the morning to start work. Since X is entitled to portray any of the supernatural beings who are companions of his patron in the land above, it follows that there is wide variation in his choice of masks to be manufactured. The principal supernatural beings are always shown, and any animals, since all are supernatural, can likewise be displayed. As usual, a few *kukusiut* are invited at midday to share the meal provided for the carpenters. The number of masks to be provided is often so great that two days or more are necessary for their completion, in which case no ceremony takes place on the night [533] which would normally be *qotlim*; the *kukusiut* merely gather and again practise their songs.

* 575 * 796 [515] [532] [184] [781] [535] [834] But the day after is *qotlim*. At dusk the *kukusiut* are called in for a final rehearsal of the songs, and then a summons is sent to the uninitiated, who have been washing and beautifying themselves in eager anticipation. In Kimsquit it is customary to hang some of the masks on a sloping pole behind the fire and the sight of these amazes the non-members. First the singers beat out the song of one of the women mourners and she dances in time to it, while the heralds near the door keep up a steady stream of remarks, encouraging the woman to perform yet more strenuously and to have no modesty about shaking her breasts. Then another of the women dances, followed in succession by the third and fourth if that is the number who sang the mourning songs. Next the *ănuyex* perform, each in succession accompanying the song composed for him. Now comes the central feature of the evening, the performance of X himself. As the singers strike up the shaman's song which he is

2:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

cases though an infant in arms, though uninitiated, can be brought to dances by its mother; distinctions between rich and poor, slave and freeman, become of slight importance; all that really matters is whether a person is or is not a *kusiut*. Membership in the society seems to the uninitiated the most desirable thing in life, although their fears are always so strong that they never cease to dread actual admission. The feeling of class consciousness which exists in a somewhat mild form at other seasons of the year, gives place to a powerful sentiment of superiority on the part of members of the society over those who are not so fortunate. Even the respect normally shown to chiefs is submerged since they, too, are subject to the rule of the marshals.

Apart entirely from this attitude of superiority and inferiority, is the bond of fellowship engendered among members of the society by the rites. Whatever happens, the uninitiated *must* be deceived. Moreover, the psychological effect of gathering nightly in a body for a specific purpose is tremendous. Night after night they eat together; night after night they listen to the words of the marshals, who impress on them the need for co-operation and secrecy, who hold before them the good example set by their fellows who have carried out rites successfully, who emphasize the fact that they are doing as their fathers did. The ceremonial import is of greatest consequence at all these gatherings, but when the uninitiated have withdrawn the *kukusiut* relax somewhat and enjoy themselves. The food itself is always of the best and some of the usual restrictions are removed. It is, for example, the only time that women are allowed to eat the flesh of seals. If this delicacy is provided the marshals enjoy the tidbits, but after Cannibals, novices, and others have received preferential treatment, the remainder is distributed to all and sundry.

It has been stated by some writers, especially those unfamiliar with the significance of native ceremonial life, that the dances of the coastal tribes are orgies of immorality. This point was investigated with care and it may be stated posi-

2: McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

tively that such is not the case among the Bella Coola. At the present time both drunkenness and vice are rampant, but neither of these practices is apparent on the nights when dances are taking place. The writer was present at many *kusiut* dances, in each case attended by practically every resident, and during them he saw only two drunken men. With regard to these, the sentiment of the influential members of the society was one of regret that the marshals could no longer exercise their prerogatives and punish the offenders. As several Bella Coola expressed it:

"Our dances are sacred and ceremonial, a drunken man spoils them."

As a rule they do not regard drunkenness as a serious vice, if a vice at all, hence this attitude was illuminating. It is more difficult to speak with certainty about morality; no breaches of it could have occurred at the ceremonies witnessed, nor was there any evidence that the excitement led to any licentious actions. On the whole, the dances are desirable since they provide a source of tremendous interest and importance. Vice flourishes with lassitude and boredom; anything that stimulates the people reduces it, and when the Bella Coola are engaged in ceremonial rites, the sentiment of the seniors of the community is strongly opposed to anything that interferes with the solemnity of the occasion.

There is no reason to suppose that these factors were not present in former times, more potent than now when belief in the supernatural powers of the *kukusiut* has passed away. The whole question of sexual morality at *kusiut* dances was investigated with considerable care.

One point emphasized by all Bella Coola was that no *kusiut* was allowed to have relations with an uninitiated person, whether his wife or not, during the period that his face was blackened and he was wearing a ceremonial collar. The reason for this prohibition seems to have been one not of morality, but of the necessity for preserving the dignity and secrecy of the *kusiut* society. An offender was punished by being struck

2:McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

by a marshal with a billet of firewood; such a blow was never repeated and might or might not cause death. The woman with whom the member had misdemeaned himself was either initiated at once or killed if her relatives could not provide a name and prerogative.

Restrictions between members of the society were less severe. Particularly during the long nights of *lsuxtämem* and *nusiutälsap*, when only *kukusiut* were present and when men and women, often scantily clad, were closely associated, there seems to have been a certain amount of immorality. It was by no means a time of licence, nor was laxity encouraged by the marshals; intercourse between members of the society did not conflict with *kusiut* regulations, and was accordingly a matter that concerned the individuals alone.

Relations between the actual dancers and members of the other sex were formerly governed by strict rules, rigidly enforced by the marshals. After the coming of a call, a man could hold intercourse with a *kusiut*, provided that he did so in his own home, but in no other. But after *nebusam*, when he left his house, continence was demanded until the end of the season and the burning of the enclosure-platform. The only exception to this rule was that if a second dancer received a call in the same house, the restrictions placed on the first were raised while the call was actually upon the second; that is, between *lsuxtämem* and *nebusam*. After that both were subject to strict continence, unless a third call came to the same dwelling. The Bella Coola of today offer no explanation for this law, save that disregard of it was displeasing to the supernatural beings. An offender in this case was likewise punished by being struck once by a marshal.

The religious aspects of the dances, as exemplified by the attitude of the Bella Coola to the masked figures and other phenomena, was described in the early part of this chapter, but additional observations may now be made. The writer realizes that the reader must find it difficult to understand how the uninitiated can be deluded into thinking that masked

8:Boas E-5 (1886-ca. 1890)1897
NE6 Bellacoola NE6

to him and takes him up to the sun, where he is initiated. Early one morning he returns, and is heard outside the houses. He has lost all his hair, which, it is believed, has been torn out by the strong breeze blowing in the higher regions. He is quite naked, and bites everyone whom he can lay hold of. If he can not catch anyone he will bite his own arm. It is believed that he has lost his soul, which fled from the body when the spirit came to him. Therefore the shamans must try for four days to recapture his soul. The night after they have recovered it the Elaxō'La dances, clothed in a bearskin and wearing a large head ring, heavy bracelets and anklets, all made of red cedar bark. Sometimes he appears wearing the mask of the S'ā'Lpsta (fig. 200), the spirit which initiated him. This mask corresponds exactly to that of BaxbakuālanuXsi'wasē of the Kwakiutl. Some Elaxō'La do not bite people, but merely devour raw salmon or tear dogs to pieces and devour them. Those who bite people will also devour corpses. The Elaxō'La has to observe a number of regulations. For four years after his initiation he must not gamble. He must stay away from his wife for one year, but this period is being reduced to one month. For two or three months he must not leave his house.

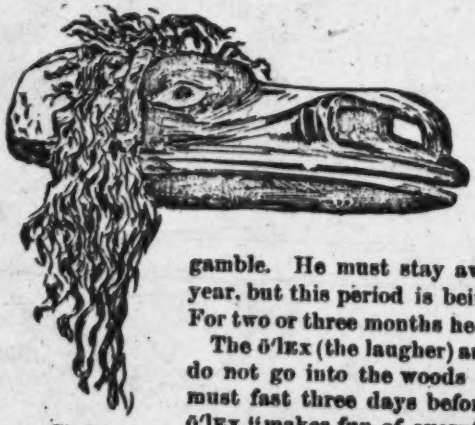

Fig. 200.
MASK OF THE S'Ā'LPSTA.
Bi'lxula.
Cat. No. 77020, U. S. N. M. Collected by F. Boas.

The ō'lEx (the laugher) and the dā'tia (the thrower) do not go into the woods to be initiated, but both must fast three days before their first dance. The ō'lEx "makes fun of everything" and scratches people with his nails. The dā'tia carries stones and sticks and breaks household goods and canoes. If he has destroyed some object during the day, he pays for it at night when he dances. The ō'lEx and the dā'tia, after they have danced, must stay in their houses for one month.

If a person transgresses the laws of the kū'siut, for instance, when the Elaxō'La gambles, or when a man performs a dance to which he has no right, also when a person derides the ceremonies or makes a mistake in dancing, his punishment is death. The chiefs assemble in council and the offender is called before the court. After his offense has been proved, he is asked whether he is willing to suffer the penalty of death. If he is not willing and one of his relatives is found willing to take the penalty on himself, the guilty party is spared and the substitute killed in his stead. The execution of the judgment is intrusted to the shaman, who bewitches the condemned person by throwing disease into him or by poisoning him in some other (supernatural?) way. The object thrown by the shaman is a shell, bone, or finger nail, around